2012

From Tiananmen to Taipei

Micaela Tucker

Concordia University-Portland

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

Tucker, Micaela (2012) "From Tiananmen to Taipei," The Promethean: Vol. 20 : Iss. 1 , Article 36.
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol20/iss1/36

This Story is brought to you for free and open access by CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Promethean by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.
She found a freckle on her cheek. It was motionless like the shovel-smashed rat decaying in the ditch near the house. For two days, the stale air held the stench of pale intestine flattened against gravel and skin. The boy poked its hardened body with the stubby finger of a fallen tree branch. Squatting on the lawn, his mint green shorts caressed his mud and grass soaked heels that barely touched the ground as he peered over the ditch, with stick in hand, towards the furry lump and lifted its cordate paw.

She found the freckle while scouring her glass face. Interestingly, She did not care much about appearance. Her blue walnut eyes perused her standing reflection. Handrail arms with doorknob wrists and crooked fingers latched to palm around the overhead moon-shaped handle. Excess flesh clung to her waist below bulky, skyline ribs. The subway car shook on the track as it turned. Startled, She returned to her gaze. Her eyes were Windex blue, but large pupils and fat black caterpillar eyelashes brought darkness to her fair complexion. Perhaps She was pretty.

She felt empty. She watched her chest expand with air and remembered inhaling double-apple molasses dredged tobacco while sinking into the typical free college couch with the engulfing off-beige floral cloud cushions and the sugary brownish spot covered with a thrift store purchased pied serape blanket. Voices and laughter commingled with smoke but her mind fixed on faces of women ravaged by men. The process, she learned, was similar to stuff your own teddy bear, except men plunge women with any object handy to make mothers and sisters meat on a stick, or pipe, or blade. But like the teddy bear, he gets to take her home when finished. Controlled women uncontrollably drip bodily waste as morning coffee filter droplets get swallowed by the black puddle filling the glass pot below repainted kitchen cabinets.

The brakes squealed as the automated voice announced the metro stop in three languages. Feet shuffled in from the platform. The
slumped Chinese woman dragged her burden through the sardined subway. The frail greying woman forced her free hand against strangers' chests. With fingers outstretched and face pressed towards her bosom, she cried, "mama, meimei" (mother, little sister). With dim eyes still fixed on her own reflection, She pushed the sun-stained hand aside and noticed its tender warmth, cracked like oatmeal raisin cookies, and covered in peasant filth. When the vagrant dawdled past her, She inhaled with relief, then choked on the trail of powdered sweat, urine, and mud.

She wiped the dirtied hand on her pants and tried to wipe the woman from her mind. She bunched the loose denim on her outer thigh as her excuses curdled. That needy hand was warm, pulsing with humanity. She had been nothing but cold, expecting compassion to ignite her hollowed, complacent heart. She looked at her cheek, impressed with Apollo's kiss and waited for the spark.

Notes from our judge:
The poetic and vibrant language used in this piece really makes it come alive. Each paragraph is filled with sensory words and descriptions that form an interesting perspective of the author's world. Though the darker aspects of this story are made clear with blunt and concise descriptions by the narrator, they are entwined with lines such as "its tender warmth, cracked like oatmeal raisin cookies, and covered in peasant filth" that add brightness and a strange sense of hopefulness to painfully sad and broken images. This combination of sorrow and beauty draws the reader in and creates a hauntingly beautiful piece.

You Stole My Heart
(But I Guess I Left the Door Unlocked)

Emma Sleeman

I called the police to report a crime. They said, "We don't deal with these sorts of things. And besides," they continued, like this was my fault, "you really should've kept a closer eye on it if it was so important to you."

Red in the face, kicking myself, I resolved to find out where I went wrong and returned to the scene of the crime where I found my mistake staring me in the face: I'd left the safe wide open and given you a key to the front door. I asked you how you could do such a thing, so you took my hand, led me down the street, and walked me wordlessly into the bank. You summoned the highest-ranked worker in sight, showed your ID, filled out a form, and shushed me when I tried to ask just what was going on. Then we walked to the back, where they opened the biggest vault—the one that had too many locks to count—and you told me to follow you inside. I watched you pull out a tiny silver key, and with it unlock a solid steel box.

I wondered what treasure could be inside that needed such high security. You said, "Come and look." So I did; I saw my stolen heart, gave you a puzzled look. That's when you held me close and whispered in my ear, "I wanted to make sure it wouldn't ever get hurt."